



City of
Richmond

City of Richmond Editorial Style Guide

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Purpose

The publication of the City of Richmond Editorial Style Guide is part of a larger effort to support standards of quality and consistency throughout City of Richmond print, web and other communications.

This guide is intended to help staff avoid inconsistencies in spelling, capitalization and other matters of editorial style, which distract readers and undermines their confidence in the message. It is meant to support writers without being prescriptive.

Range of application

The style guide is for use in print and web communications produced by City of Richmond staff. It applies to all promotional, marketing and general communications materials, official correspondence, reports and templates.

Any style guide is a living document. As new editorial questions arise and language and usage change, it will evolve. The City of Richmond Corporate Communications team welcomes input from guide users.

Editorial assistance

Corporate Communications can help with questions regarding interpretation of points in this guide, issues not covered in this document or matters of spelling and style.

Certain types of publications, including specialized topic areas, may raise questions of style not covered in this guide. In such cases, writers are encouraged to consult an appropriate reference authority.

References

- The Canadian Press Style Guide
- The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling
- Elements of Style
- Canadian Oxford Dictionary
- City of Richmond Graphic Standards Manual

Before putting pen to paper

Audience and voice

Communications produced by the City of Richmond address a wide range of audiences including government officials, Richmond residents, customers, community partners, union representatives and City staff. These communications must be tailored to their respective audiences. Writers and editors are expected to utilize simple and inclusive language to reflect the character of the City of Richmond in their communications.

Plain language

Writing in plain language means writing in a way that is easy for readers to understand. To make your writing clear, think of your readers' needs. Consider their background knowledge and reading level, organize information in ways that makes sense to them and use examples they can relate to.

The most effective way to communicate with your readers is with concise and simple language. Use simple sentence constructions and keep your paragraphs and sentences short. Use straightforward, familiar, gender-inclusive words. Be direct and to the point.

When writing for readers at a low reading level, particularly when English is their second language, take extra care to use simple words and sentence structure. Use only the most common words, and avoid colloquialisms, clichés and acronyms.

Even when writing for a peer audience, it is good practise to use simple, plain language to avoid forming habits that may be carried over into writing for a broader audience.

Voice (first, second, or third person point of view)

The first person ("I" or "we") emphasizes the writer. It can be used when writing correspondence or reports about personal experience.

The second person ("you") emphasizes the reader. It can be used when giving advice or instructions.

The third person ("he," "she," "they") emphasizes the subject. It can be used when describing what other people have done or should do.

For most City of Richmond documents, the third person is to be used.

General rules for writing

Acronyms

In general, the use of acronyms should be limited as much as possible as they are confusing to readers, particularly those with limited English language skills. It is fine to use commonly known terms such as RCMP or those with a descriptive purpose (SUCCESS), but most others can and should be avoided. Even common acronyms like ICBC might not be understood by newcomers or individuals with English as a second language.

Whenever possible, use a simple descriptor in place of an acronym. (For example, in second reference, the Plan can often replace OCP).

When acronyms are necessary, they should be spelled out the first time they are used—for example, “Richmond Enterprise Document Management System (REDMS).” The acronym can be used in subsequent references within that section. Spell them out again in each new section.

Do not use periods in acronyms consisting only of upper case letters (for example, GIS or POS). However, periods are to be used in acronyms that contain lower case or both upper and lower case letters (for example, a.m., Mrs., Dr.).

Also be aware of the use of internally known acronyms. TAG may be commonly known amongst City staff, but has no meaning outside the organization.

To form the plural of an acronym, add “s” (for example, MLAs). Do not use an apostrophe.

Capitalization

In recent years, there has been a significant and widespread shift in style away from a more formal style to one using less capitalization and punctuation. This approach is followed by the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling, among many other authorities.

Capital letters have three basic uses, of which nearly all others may be regarded as particular cases:

- (1) to give emphasis, as in official titles and initial words
- (2) to distinguish proper nouns and adjectives from common ones
- (3) to highlight words in headings and captions

For detailed guidelines on capitalization, refer to section 3.0.

Clichés

A cliché is an expression that has lost its originality and impact through overuse. Examples of clichés include “busy as a bee” and “light as a feather.” Avoid clichés “like the plague.” Remember that many newcomers to Canada who speak English as a second language may be confused by clichés that do not have a clear literal meaning.

Colloquialisms

Colloquialisms are conversational or slang expressions like “cutting-edge technology.” They are often confusing for new Canadians and others unfamiliar with their meanings. Avoid them as much as possible.

Hyphens

In general, only use hyphens to avoid ambiguity or awkward pronunciation. For guidelines and examples of how to use hyphens, see section 8.4.

Jargon

Jargon most often covers the language used by people who work in a particular area or who have a common interest. Much like slang, it can develop as a kind of short-hand, to express ideas frequently discussed between members of a group. In many cases this causes a barrier to communication with those not familiar with the language of the field. Remember—just because you use certain terms daily in your job, does not mean your readers will be familiar with those terms. This can especially be confusing to individuals with English as a second language.

Unless it is essential to the purpose of the document or the intended audience, avoid the use of jargon. If it is necessary to use technical names or terms, include an explanation in the first reference.

Sentences

Keep sentences short—no longer than two to three clauses, if possible. Longer sentences are visually intimidating to the reader and hard to mentally digest.

When editing, pay extra attention to longer sentences. Often they can be broken into two shorter sentences that will be easier for the reader to understand and absorb.

Paragraphs

Keep paragraphs short—no longer than four or five sentences, if possible. Longer paragraphs are visually intimidating to the reader.

Try to limit each paragraph to one topic, unless linking related points. Start a new paragraph when changing topics or shifting focus.

Leave an extra line between paragraphs. Do not indent the first line of a paragraph.

Redundancy

Redundancy is saying the same thing twice. Pay attention to redundant words and phrases, as in “12 noon,” “close proximity” or “a variety of different ways.”

Spelling

Do not rely on computerized spell checks to ensure your spelling is correct. Most computerized spell checks are based on common American usage. Canadian usage often varies from American style, such as using “our” suffixes instead of “or” for words like humour.

When to use that or which

“That” is used with restrictive phrases that are essential in a sentence. A restrictive clause is one that is essential to the meaning of a sentence – if it is removed, the meaning of the sentence will change.

Parks that have playgrounds are popular with young families.

“Which” is used with non-restrictive phrases that state non-essential information but add relevant detail. A non-restrictive clause can be omitted without changing the meaning of a sentence. Non-restrictive clauses are either in brackets or have a comma before and after them (or only before them if they come at the end of a sentence):

Playgrounds, which can be found in many of Richmond’s parks, are popular with young families.

Editing

When editing, determine which words or sentences are unnecessary or too complex. Strip sentences down to their essentials. Try reading the written content out loud to identify vague or awkward wording, inappropriate tone, formal phrasing and jargon. Avoid sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

Use, but do not rely on, automated spelling and style checkers.

Prior to finalizing the document, have a co-worker review for spelling and grammatical mistakes, typos or formatting glitches. Do not rely solely on self-editing.

Quick reference appendices

1.0 Abbreviations and acronyms

1.1 Lower case

Use periods with abbreviations that appear in lower case.

a.m., p.m., i.e., e.g.

1.2 Upper case

Use no periods with abbreviations that appear in upper case.

CAO, USA (US), BCE, CE

Use no periods with acronyms.

Place acronyms in upper case except when they have become common words.

TAG, RCMP, ROBO, scuba, laser

According to Canada Post standards, abbreviations of provinces and territories should appear in upper case without periods.

AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, NT, NU, ON, PE, QC, SK, YT

1.3 Mixed upper and lower case

Abbreviations with mixed upper and lower case should have a period at the end.

Cllr., Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.

When abbreviating personal names, use periods and a space between abbreviations.

C. V. Carlile, W. A. C. Bennett

1.4 Geographic locations

Spell out the names of provinces, territories, countries and states in running text, with the exception of BC, NWT and PEI (please see below).

BC, NWT and PEI are acceptable in running text for second and subsequent references to British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island.

Abbreviations may be used in lists and tables. When doing so, format abbreviations of provinces and territories according to Canada Post standards.

AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, NT, NU, ON, PE, QC, SK, YT

1.5 City of Richmond acronyms

Note: This list is for information purposes only. In most cases, use of these acronyms should only be used internally.

City of Richmond	COR
Building Approvals Division	BAD
City Centre Area Plan.....	CCAP
City Hall West	CHW
Computerized Leisure Activity Scheduling Software.....	CLASS
Development Cost Charges.....	DCC
Emergency Operations Centre.....	EOC
Emergency Social Services	ESS
Expression of Interest	EOI
Freedom of Information	FOI
Front of House.....	FOH
Geographical Information Survey	GIS
Minoru Arenas.....	MA
Minoru Aquatic Centre	MAC
Official Community Plan	OCP
Operating Budget Impact.....	OBI
Partners For Beautification	PFB
People, Excellence, Leadership, Team, Innovation	PELTI
Point of Sale	POS
Performance Partnership Plan.....	PPP
Public Sector Accounting Board	PSAB
Request For Proposal.....	RFP
Request For Quotation	RFQ
Richmond Arts Centre.....	RAC
Richmond Art Gallery.....	RAG
Richmond Enterprise Document Management System.....	REDMS
Richmond Fire-Rescue	RFR
Richmond Ice Centre.....	RIC
Richmond University	RU
Royal Canadian Mounted Police.....	RCMP
Standard Operating Procedures.....	SOP
Tangible Capital Assets.....	TCA
The Administrators Group.....	TAG

Urban Development Institute	UDI
Vancouver International Airport	YVR
Watermania	WM
Works Yard	WY

1.6 Abbreviating months

Abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when standing alone or with year alone.

December 1999

August is a hot month.

2.0 Addresses

2.1 Format

Please follow Canada Post usage.

City of Richmond

6911 No. 3 Road [note no punctuation]

Richmond BC V6Y 2C1 [two spaces between province and postal code]

Canada

2.2 Capitalization, spelling and numbers

Always express street addresses with numerals (not spelled out).

6931 Granville Road

In running text, spell out “road,” “avenue,” “street” etc. Also spell out any directional abbreviations.

Burnside Road West

Capitalize “Road,” “Street,” etc. when used with a name (as in the above examples).

Capitalize letters that appear in street addresses.

31B Baker Street

2.3 Abbreviations of province names

In addresses, use the Canada Post standards for abbreviations of provinces and territories.

AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, NT, NU, ON, PE, QC, SK, YT

See also Geographic locations: Abbreviations.

3.0 Capitalization

3.1 The general rule

The general rule is to capitalize common nouns when they represent a complete formal name and use lower case in subsequent partial or informal forms.

the Government of Canada; the Canadian government; the government

the Government of British Columbia; the BC government; the government

the City of Richmond; the City (when referring to the Corporation); the city (when referring to geography)

3.2 The case for lower case

This guide recommends a lower case style for several reasons:

- When too many words are capitalized, they lose their importance and no longer attract attention.
- Readability studies have shown text is more easily read when it is not peppered with initial caps or all caps.
- Using lower case letters in no way diminishes the stature or credibility of an individual's position or a department's reputation.
- When writing promotional or marketing materials (such as brochures or print ads), emphasis can be achieved more effectively by the skillful use of white space, typeface and typestyle than by excessive use of initial caps or all caps.

3.3 Capitalization after colons

Do not capitalize the first letter of a common noun after a colon in running text, even if the colon is followed by a complete sentence.

3.4 Capitalization of job and position titles

In running text, capitalize formal job titles directly preceding a name and not set off by a comma. Use lower case in other instances.

Mayor Malcolm Brodie; the mayor; Malcolm Brodie, mayor

Chief Administrative Officer George Duncan; the CAO; George Duncan, chief administrative officer

See Lists: Vertical lists and capitalization.

3.5 Capitalization and quotations

Capitalize the first word of a quotation that is a complete sentence.

3.6 City vs. city

When referring to the Corporation, capitalize City.

When referring to the geographical location, do not capitalize city.

3.7 Building and facility names

Only the full, formal name of the building and facility should be capitalized. Use lower case for all informal references:

the City Works Yard; the works yard

Richmond City Hall; city hall; the hall

West Richmond Community Centre; community centre

The authoritative source for official names of City buildings and venues is www.richmond.ca/cityhall/buildings/buildings.

3.8 Committee names

The names of committees, task groups and other working groups are to be capitalized.

Community Safety Committee

Public Works and Transportation Committee

3.9 Department and unit names

Follow the general rules of capitalization. Please refer directly to the department for its formal name.

Parks and Recreation Department

Parks Division

Planning and Development, the planning and development department; the department

3.10 Job titles

Please contact individual departments directly for formal job titles in their units.

Capitalize formal job titles directly preceding a name and not set off by commas. Use lower case in other instances.

General Manager, Planning and Development Joe Erceg; Joe Erceg, general manager of planning and development; general manager

Senior Manager, Corporate Communications Ted Townsend; Ted Townsend, senior manager of corporate communications

Councillor Harold Steves; Harold Steves, councillor

See also Lists: Vertical lists and capitalization.

Always hyphenate the titles “vice-president.”

3.11 Other capitalizations

Capitalize the complete formal name of the following:

- proper names of nationalities, peoples, ethnicities and tribes (for example, Aboriginal, Indigenous, Métis, Coast Salish, Canadian, Ainu)
- titles of books, films, plays, poems, songs, speeches, works of art
- brand names (for example, Richmond O Zone)
- holidays and holy days (for example, Christmas, New Year's Eve)
- laws, acts and historic documents (for example, Local Government Act)
- full name of organizations and institutions (for example, City of Richmond, Richmond Olympic Oval)
- political parties and movements (for example, Liberal party)
- religions (for example, Catholic, Jewish)

3.12 Geographic locations

Capitalize regions but not their derivatives. Use lower case to indicate mere direction or position.

- the West (region of Canada), Western Canada
- West Coast, the coast
- the Maritimes
- Vancouver Island, the island
- western BC

4.0 Internet

4.1 Email and web addresses

Email addresses should appear as follows:

jdoe@richmond.ca

Web addresses that include the "www" prefix need not include the protocol prefix `http://` unless they are used in a context that includes other web addresses that do require a protocol prefix.

Always include the preceding protocol when the address in question does not contain the `www` prefix.

`https://outlook.richmond.ca`

4.2 Internet punctuation

Normal punctuation should be used after a URL.

Further information is available at www.richmond.ca.

Try to avoid breaking a line of text in the middle of a URL. If it is necessary to break a line of text in the middle of a URL, do so after a slash.

4.3 Spelling and capitalization of common Internet-related words

Do not rely on computerized spell checks to ensure your spelling is correct. Most computerized spell checks are based on common American usage. Canadian usage often varies from American style, such as using “our” suffixes instead of “or” for words like humour.

Please see section 9.0 Tricky and Troublesome word list, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary and/or The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling for more direction.

5.0 Italics

5.1 Emphasis

Italics should be used only occasionally for emphasis.

5.2 Foreign words and phrases

Italicize foreign words and phrases that are likely to be unfamiliar to readers.

5.3 Titles of publications and other works

Titles of books, journals, movies, magazines and plays are italicized; articles, chapters and poems are not.

6.0 Lists

6.1 Run-in lists (items in series)

Run-in lists that introduce lists with the word “including” do not require a colon.

The City of Richmond is a leader in a number of areas relating to environmental sustainability, including tree preservation, stewardship and recycling programs.

With colon: Richmond is a leader in a number of areas relating to environmental stewardship: tree preservation, stewardship, and recycling programs.

If any of the items in a series requires internal punctuation, a semicolon should separate all items.

Participants in programs offered by the Richmond Nature Park should pack warm, sturdy outer clothing; two pairs of boots; and binoculars.

6.2 Vertical lists

Vertical lists can stand alone with or without a heading.

The acronym for the City of Richmond's corporate values is TRACKS:

- Team
- Results orientated
- Agility
- Continuous improvement
- Knowledge
- Sustainability

Bulleted or numbered lists may be introduced by a complete sentence followed by a colon. These types of lists do not require punctuation.

Participants must provide the following documents:

- passport or birth certificate
- a letter of permission
- record of completed aquatic programs

Bulleted lists that form part of a sentence and are not preceded by a colon require internal and terminal punctuation. (These lists are often better run into the text and should only be bulleted if the context demands they be highlighted.)

Prior to submitting their application to host a community celebration, event organizers should ensure they have

- consulted with residents;
- conducted a traffic study; and
- organized volunteers.

6.3 When to use bulleted or numbered lists

Use numbered vertical lists to indicate order, chronology or relative importance. If order, chronology or importance does not need to be indicated, use bullets.

6.4 Vertical lists and capitalization

Do not capitalize the first word of items in a bulleted or numbered list unless it is a proper noun. If bulleted sentences can stand on their own, the first word should be capitalized. They also require a period at the end of the bulleted sentence.

Mary's shopping list included:

- eggs
- bread
- milk

Before going to the grocery store, Mary needs to:

- Find a recipe to make a birthday cake for her daughter.
- Go to the bank to withdraw money for groceries.
- Pick up her son at dance practice so he can help with the shopping.

Names and formal job titles should be capitalized and set off by commas when set into a vertical list.

George Duncan, Chief Administrative Officer

Dave Semple, General Manager, Parks and Recreation

7.0 Numbers

7.1 General rules

In running text, spell out numbers one through nine. For 10 and above use numerals. The exceptions are below (always use numerals):

measurements that use abbreviations or symbols (for example, 15 ml)

percentages in a chart or graph format (for example, 6%)

quantities consisting of whole numbers and fractions (for example, 1 and ½ times)

currency (for example, \$20)

Always spell out numbers that begin sentences.

For numbers in official names, follow the organization's spelling style even when it is at odds with City of Richmond practice.

7.2 Ordinals

In linguistics, ordinal numbers are the words representing the rank of a number with respect to some order, in particular order or position (i.e. first, second, third, etc.). The general rules for numbers apply to ordinal numbers as well.

Spell out ordinal numbers when referring to the year of employment.

Bill completed his fourth year on the job.

Dates should not contain an ordinal unless used in the body of the text. Avoid as much as possible. When using the abbreviated form of ordinals, place numerals and letters on the same line. Do not use superscript.

The 10th Annual Island City Bike Tour, not 10th

Streets that are named with ordinals should also follow the general rule.

First Street, 7th Avenue

When writing dates without the year, do not use the ordinal form.

Feb. 15, not Feb. 15th

7.3 Numbers with four or more digits

In numerals with four or more digits, use commas to separate groups of three digits except house, telephone, page, year and other serial numbers.

2,400; 12800 Cambie Road; 604-276-4000

Very large numbers can use a mixture of numerals and spelled out numbers.

1.2 million, 250 billion

7.4 Currency

Always use numerals to express currency.

Canadian currency is expressed in numerals accompanied by the appropriate symbols (\$ and ¢).

Note that zeros after a decimal point should only be used if they appear in context with other fractional amounts.

Prices ranged from \$4.30 to \$6.00 not \$4.30 to \$6.

Very large amounts may be expressed with a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers and should appear with the currency symbol.

\$6 million, \$10.1 billion

Please note there is no space between the currency symbol and the numeral.

7.5 Decimals

Use a zero before a decimal point when the value is less than one.

0.5, -0.62

7.6 Fractions

Use fraction characters (or superscript/subscript) whenever possible instead of full-sized numerals separated by a slash.

4 ½ not 4 1/2

Simple fractions that are not mixed numbers should be spelled out.

One-quarter not ¼

When a fraction is considered a single quantity, it is hyphenated.

She has read three-quarters of the report.

However, when the individual parts of a quantity are in question, the fraction is spelled without the hyphen.

We separated the project into four quarters.

Quantities consisting of whole numbers and fractions should be expressed in numerals.

8 ½ x 11 in. paper

7.7 Percentages

Percentages should be spelled out when in a sentence. Use “per cent” (two words).

Six per cent or 10 per cent

In tables, it is acceptable to use the symbol. There is no space between the numeral and the symbol %.

6%

7.8 Plurals of numerals

Spelled-out numbers form their plurals like other nouns.

The Time for Twos childcare program is full.

7.9 Ranges (inclusive numbers)

An en dash (a dash slightly longer than a hyphen) between two numbers implies “up to and including” or “through.”

Please refer to pages 5–10.

See section 8.4 Dashes and hyphens.

If “from” or “between” is used before the pair of numbers, the en dash should not be used; instead, “from” should be followed by “to” or “through,” “between” should be followed by “and.”

from 12 to 32

between 2006 and 2010

7.10 Dates and time

The following rules for dates and times apply within the body of text. In calendars, tables, forms or graphs where space is extremely tight, short forms and figures may be used.

7.11 Formatting dates

Specific dates within the body of a text should be written as follows.

Saturday, September 19, 2009

For an all-numerical date format, use the year-month-day format recommended by the Government of Canada, the Standards Council of Canada and International Organization for Standardization (ISO 8601). This format is particularly useful where machine-readable dates are needed, as in forms, spreadsheets and (electronic) date stamping, for example, for successive drafts of a document.

2009-09-19

7.12 Years

Indicate combined years according to this format:

2009/10

7.13 Decades

Decades may be spelled out (as long as the century is clear) or expressed in numerals.

the nineties, the '90s

When writing the names of decades in numerals, do not use an apostrophe before the "s." An apostrophe precedes the shortened numerical form of the decade.

the 1920s, the 1980s, the '80s, the mid-1960s

7.14 Holy days and holidays

Use the word "holidays" to refer to statutory holidays and non-religious holidays. Use the term "holy days" to refer to dates marked by religious observances.

7.15 Hours

Hours are written numerically with zeros. Do not capitalize a.m. and p.m.

9:00 a.m.

Use an en dash between times.

9:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m.

If the times are both in the morning or afternoon, you only need the a.m. or p.m. once.

9:00–10:00 a.m.

Use noon only as 12 is redundant

noon (not 12 noon)

7.16 Ranges of dates

When writing about periods of time over years, write the numbers out using an en dash (a dash slightly longer than a hyphen) not a slash (except the school year).

1999–2000 or 1999–02 (not '99–'02)

2009–2010 (not 2009–'10 or 2009/2010)

A range of times is written using the words “from” and “to” in text but with an en dash in tables.

The meeting is scheduled from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m.

Meeting, 8:00 – 11:00 p.m.

See section 8.4 Dashes and hyphens.

7.17 Metric abbreviations

The City's style is to use metric measurements as opposed to imperial. If required, imperial measurements can be included in brackets after metric measurements. The exception is products that are labeled or named in imperial i.e. a pint of beer or where the imperial measurement remains the common usage i.e. The suspect is described as being 5' 10" in height.

Metric measurement abbreviations should appear in lower case with no periods, except for the abbreviation for “litres,” which should be capitalized to avoid confusion with the numeral 1. Use one space between the numeral and the abbreviation for the unit of measure.

5 km, 20 ml, 9 L

Customary (imperial) measurement abbreviations should appear in lower case, with a period at the end of each unit.

in., ft., sq. in.

7.18 Temperature

Celsius is abbreviated as a capital.

It was 28°C yesterday.

7.19 Using numerals

If an abbreviation or symbol is used for the unit of measure, the quantity is always expressed as a numeral.

7.20 Telephone numbers

Domestic telephone numbers should be separated with hyphens, not periods. No parentheses should be used around area codes.

604-276-4300

800 numbers should be written as follows:

1-800-123-4567

International phone numbers are expressed in the ITA standard format.

+22 609 123 4567

The international prefix symbol (+) precedes the country code, which is then followed by the area code and telephone number.

8.0 Punctuation

8.1 Ampersand

Do not use the ampersand (&) in running text.

Avoid using the ampersand in job titles or the names of City of Richmond administrative units.

Business and Financial Services; not Business & Financial Services

Manager, Parks Planning and Design; not Manager, Parks Planning & Design

The ampersand is acceptable in lists and as an element in registered company names.

A&W

8.2 Commas

Put commas between the elements of a series but not before the final “and,” “or” or “nor” unless that avoids confusion.

The Partners For Beautification program provides stewardship opportunities for residents, community groups and businesses.

8.3 Contractions

Contractions (contracted forms of words with the missing letters represented with an apostrophe, such as “you’ll” and “don’t”) give writing a more conversational tone. Since they are a mark of informal writing, avoid using them when writing policy manuals or other more formal types of manuals. Avoid uncommon contractions and do not create any new ones.

Our network is connected (not our network’s connected)

8.4 Dashes and hyphens

An em dash (— longer than a hyphen or an en dash), not a hyphen (-), is used to set off a phrase in the same way as commas and brackets. There should be no spaces before or after an em dash.

The key codes for an em dash are Ctrl+Alt+- (on the number pad) or go to Insert, then Symbol, then Special Characters tab.

En dash (–): The en dash is used in ranges of numbers. See section 7.9 Ranges (inclusive numbers).

The key codes for an en dash are Ctrl+- (on the number pad) or go to Insert, then Symbol, then Special Characters tab.

Use hyphens in compound adjectives followed immediately by the noun they modify.

first-year employee

In general, only use hyphens to avoid ambiguity or awkward pronunciation. Here are some guidelines on using hyphens:

- use a hyphen with certain prefixes and suffixes (for example, “re-evaluate,” “co-worker”)
- use a hyphen with the prefixes “all-,” “ex-,” “non-” and “self-”
- use a hyphen after a series of words with a common base that is not repeated (for example, “short- and long-range planning”)
- use a hyphen to create compound terms that precede the words they modify (for example, “long-term debt,” “up-to-date safety requirements,” “one-day course”)
- if the words in the compound term follow the words they modify, do not use a hyphen (for example, “plans for the long term”)
- do not use a hyphen after “-ly” adverbs (for example, “the newly created position”)
- use a hyphen to combine fractions and compound numbers from 21 to 99 (for example, two-thirds, one-quarter, forty-nine)
- use a hyphen to combine numeral-unit adjectives, for example, 10-litre sample

When using a compound term in a heading, capitalize the word after the hyphen if it is a noun or proper adjective or if the words have equal weight (for example, Cross-Reference).

8.5 Ellipses

Use an ellipsis (three spaced periods) to indicate an omission from a text or quotation. A sentence ending with an ellipsis requires no further end punctuation.

The key codes for an ellipsis are Alt+0133 for Windows.

8.6 Parentheses and brackets

Use parentheses sparingly (only when other punctuation will not work).

Remember parentheses, like commas, are used to enclose non-essential information.

Use full parentheses in numbering or lettering a series within a sentence.

The union pressed for (a) more pay, (b) a shorter work week and (c) better pensions.

Use parentheses to enclose equivalents and translations.

Richmond's Animal Control Bylaw stipulates an individual may only have three (3) dogs off-leash.

If a punctuation mark applies to a whole sentence, put it after the closing parenthesis.

If a punctuation mark applies only to the words inside the parenthetical section, put the mark inside the closing parenthesis.

8.7 Quotation marks

Use double quotation marks for direct quotes; use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

"To quote Gandhi," said the community member, "'be the change you want to see in the world' is an important tenet to live by."

Use quotation marks to set off a significant word or phrase.

"For the City of Richmond to be the most appealing, livable and well-managed community in Canada."

Use quotation marks around unfamiliar terms on first reference or to refer to words as words or letters as letters.

To form the plural of an acronym add "s."

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks. The question mark and exclamation mark go inside the quote marks when they apply to the quoted matter only outside when they apply to the entire sentence.

8.8 Solidus (slash)

Use a slash to separate alternatives (for example, either/or).

But use a hyphen for joint titles (for example, secretary-treasurer).

The solidus should not be used to mean “and.”

REDMS 101/102 means REDMS 101 or 102, not REDMS 101 and 102

8.9 Spacing between sentences

Use one space, not two spaces, between the end punctuation of one sentence and the beginning of the next sentence.

9.0 Tricky and troublesome word list

The following word list is provided as a handy reference to troublesome words. It follows the Canadian Oxford Dictionary except in references marked with an asterisk (*), which indicate exceptions to that authority.

a lot (not alot)

affect (most often a verb, e.g. The arrow affected the aardvark)

behaviour

biannually (twice a year)

biennial (every two years)

centre, centred

cheque

colour

Councillor (not Councilor)

dike not dyke (note: the City uses dyke in some historical cases, such as West Dyke Road. However, general references to dike should follow this style. Dike repairs are underway in Richmond.)*

effect (most often a noun, e.g. The effect was mind popping)

email

enrol (not enroll), enrolled, enrolling, enrolment*

ensure (to be sure of, to make sure)

home page

honour, honourable, but honorary

humour, but humorous

Internet

its (possessive)

it's (contraction of “it is”)

labour

lay off (verb), layoff (noun)
letter of permission
license (verb), licence (noun)
litre (abbreviation: L, for singular and plural, no period)
livability, livable (not liveable)*
online
per cent
practise (verb), practice (noun)
resumé
stationary (adjective), stationery (noun)
theatre
web (but World Wide Web)
web page
web server
website
well-being
worldwide (but World Wide Web)

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